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ABSTRACT

At the University of South Dakota, as part of a campus-wide celebration of diversity focused on northeastern Asia (China, Japan, Korea), undergraduate and graduate Children's Literature classes participated by locating relevant literature and presenting them dramatically. Students were divided into six small cooperative groups. Each group chose a country to focus on, located all the children's literature available from the selected country, selected one for presentation, researched background information on the country, and selected a form of dramatic presentation for the work (improvisation, reader's theater, creative drama, wide story, choral speaking, puppetry, or play). Students learned research techniques, a variety of dramatic presentations, collaboration among group members, editing and rewriting techniques, and how to find and collect cultural material and information. The document contains detailed descriptions of the method and theory of each type of presentation as well as descriptions of the actual resulting presentations which included: (1) readers theater presentation of "The Paper Crane" (Molly Bang); (2) readers theater presentation of "Seven Korean Sisters" (Hahn and Han); (3) wide story presentation of "Tikki Tikki Tembo" (A. Mosie); (4) puppetry to present "The Boy of the Three Year Nap" (Diane Snyder); and (5) a play presentation of "The Chinese Mirror" (M. Ginsburg). (Contains 16 references.) (JB)

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CELEBRATING DIVERSITY THROUGH NORTHEASTERN ASIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS

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Celebrating Diversity Through Northeastern Asian Children's Literature and Dramatic Productions

Introduction

It is customary at the University of South Dakota during the Spring Semester for the School of Education to celebrate diversity. The Global/Multicultural Committee announces the area of the world to be studied and recognized in some way in each of the undergraduate and graduate education classes. The 1995 Spring Semester the region of the world being studied was Northeastern Asia consisting of China, Japan, and Korea. This paper deals with how the undergraduate and graduate Children's Literature classes became involved in the study of Northeast Asia.

Process

The students were divided into six small cooperative groups, then were given the directions that included: 1) The groups must decide which country they would focus on and there must be two groups representing each country; 2) They were to locate all the children's literature available from the selected country. They could use the professor's personal collection, their own personal libraries, the university library, and the city library. Once the literature was located they were to select one literary work for presentation; 3) They were to research background information about the respective

country; and 4) They were to select a form of dramatic presentation from the following: Improvisation, Reader's Theater, Creative Drama, Wide Story, Choral Speaking, Puppetry, or Play with Script. The reason these types of dramatic presentations were selected is because teachers use these productions in the classroom. It would also provide the university students the opportunity to participate in one of the formats and at the same time be able to observe the others in preparation and final production. A description of each is included.

Dramatic Productions

Improvisation

Improvisation is a drama with dialogue but without a script. Literary works appropriate for this type of drama are folk tales or books that are familiar to the participants. The drama needs to be rehearsed several times completely, production needs to hold together so the participants are satisfied before the performance in front of an audience. The key for a successful improvisation is that the students must be more familiar with a piece of literature than they might normally. They need to really know and understand the characters in order to truly comprehend the story line, and be able to portray the feelings and emotions, as well as what actually took place in the story.

It allows participants to use natural and purposeful language. When the students are developing the improvisation they may stick closely to the original story line, they may develop a larger part for a particular character, add a character, or omit a character or certain parts of the drama. The participants should not memorize parts, therefore, the dialogue should be ad-libbed and participants should be feel free to use their own language (Bromley, 1988).

Reader's Theater

Reader's Theater is production is a form of oral interpretation that involves a group of students who read and interpret literature aloud from a script that has been specially adapted from a literary work. Any genre of children's literature would be appropriate for Reader's Theater. As stories are adapted for a reader's theater presentation they should contain:

1. plenty of dialogue and clear prose;
2. children or personified animals as main characters that are lively and humorous;
3. parts that are nearly the same in length and provide a good balance;
4. a story format that is short is appropriate especially for the first time using this format(Cox, 1988);
5. the story line should contain an element of conflict and

suspense;

6. the reading should provoke laughter, surprise or wonder and suspense;
7. literary works selected should require a little rewrite; and
8. literary works that are suitable for storytelling would also be appropriate for Reader's Theater (Coody, 1992).

The procedure for adapting a literary work (Cox, 1988) such as a basal reader stories, student's magazines, textbooks, and newspapers are:

1. a narrator should be added to identify time, place, scene, or characters through out the presentation;
2. lines that are critical to the development of the plot, or the main action of the story, imagery or figurative language that would be difficult to express in words should be deleted; and
3. lines that contain description should be written in such a way that the character can say it, or line that would help move the story along should be changed.

Once the script has been written, typed and duplicated for each character, Coody (1992) suggests that each character's part be marked with a different pastel-colored liner. Also, each script should be labeled with the character's name or title and stored in a "Reader's Theater" box for easy access.

The participants in Reader's Theater need to sensitive to the use of their voices in relation to the rate of delivery, tone, pitch, and loudness and to transmit a meaning and message. They should use nonverbal language and gestures to convey additional meaning to the message.

The readers should sit on stools, chairs, or on the floor facing the audience. They should hold their copy of the script in a dark colored folder and refer to it only when necessary. The participants should focus over the heads of the audience, for instance, on the back wall (Moffett & Wagner, 1983). They want to visualize a mirror on the back wall, and should talk to each other through it.

This type of dramatic presentation does not require costumes, props, sets, lighting, music, or forgetting of lines on the part of the readers (Busching, 1981). After the script has been written and the production practiced, the actual performance may occur almost immediately in the classroom or on a stage (Cox, 1988).

Creative Drama

Of the various types of drama, creative drama is considered informal and lends itself to the reenactment of a story. If the teacher plans to use this in the classroom, the following need to be considered according to McCaslin (1990):

1. should be based on a piece of quality literature;

2. the dialogue is created by the actor and should not be memorized lines from a script;
3. movement by the actors is essential; and
4. scenery and costumes are to be used, props may be used occasionally.

It is important for all involved in Creative Drama that the performance is for the benefit of the persons taking part, and not for the audience. One advantage for this type of production is that different dramatic presentations of the same piece of literature may occur at the same time in the classroom (McCaslin, 1990). Literary works that may used in Creative Drama are a single chapter from a book, a picture book, a short story, and folk tales. Ideally, the best way to start is with a simple story with two to six characters that is action packed. The steps that should be followed when using Creative Drama in the classroom include(Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1993):

1. the story that has been selected should be read aloud to the students;
2. it should be read a second time and the students should pay careful attention to the characters, sequence of the storyline, setting, and plot;
3. the students should list the characters and scenes on the

chalkboard or on a newsprint tablet, then they should cast the various parts (Several casts may be selected for the same literary work, therefore, each cast may watch the other productions);

4. the cast(s) then discuss the scenes, plot, and storyline in relation to characters;
5. the cast(s) should decide how they intend to handle the performance; and
6. after each performance the class should discuss the success.

McCaslin (1990) has developed a list of questions that could be used to evaluate a drama. These include:

1. Did they tell the story?
2. What did you like about the opening scene?
3. Did the characters show that they were excited, angry, unhappy, so on?
4. When we play it again, can you think if anything that would improve it? and
5. Was anything important left out?

An objective of Creative Drama is to help the participant develop a sense of personal achievement and accomplishment (Krider, 1990).

Wide Story

A Wide Story is part of a trail game. It has a story or theme, and everything done along the trail is part of the story. The Wide Story can be played as a game, in the city park, at a troop meeting, or at home. The participants must follow the trail prepared ahead of time and all the activities must be carried out. A Wide Game can be as simple as a game of knot tying at a troop meeting. The story might be about a beautiful princess held captive by a wicked old witch. In order to help her escape, you must perform a variety of tasks, such as using different knots or a combination of knots. A Wide Game might be an all day exploration of a city using a compass, directions, maps, and trail signs. The participants might use public transportation to visit museums, civic buildings and other places of interest, while testing their Girl Scout skills.

This activity has been very effective in helping Girl Scouts develop observing, speaking, listening, sketching, and map making skills. (Handbook for Brownies and Girls Scouts, 1977). This production has been adapted for use in the classroom. The variation that would appropriate for the classroom would have the teacher and students select a piece of literature that is familiar and enjoyable. Once the selection process is complete, the story needs to be written into a script for the production. The play needs to be practiced, props, scenery, and so on need to be found or made. The

stage for the production needs to be large such as a city park, gym floor, or football field. (Be sure to ask permission of the appropriate personnel for the use of the last two venues.) The students need to practice the play as the entire space serves as the stage. Therefore, the gestures and movements must be exaggerated. The play needs to be organized and publicized just like any other theater production. Posters, advertising, programs, refreshments, and so forth need to be planned. Every student should be involved in some capacity.

Choral Speaking

Choral Speaking is an activity that incorporates the use of poetry or rhymed prose, read by many voices speaking together in one melodious, well-articulated unit (Bamman, Dawson & Whithead, 1971). Choral Speaking may be presented by an entire class or half of the class responding to the other half. There may be solos, duets, quartets, or other types of groupings. There are four basic types of Choral Speaking (Bromley, 1988):

1. Refrain is when the leader speaks most of the lines and the remaining members of the group repeat the refrain.
2. Line-a-child or line-a-group is when a student of a small group of students says a line or passage, then another child or group says a line or passage and so on.

3. Antiphonal is when two or more groups of students take turns to say a passage.
4. Unison is when the entire group says the lines or passage together.

Choral Speaking helps children use intonation, stress and duration, while it focuses on reading with expression and fluency (Miccinati, 1985).

Puppetry

The retelling of stories is an enjoyable experience for students of all ages. The enjoyment is truly enhanced with the use of puppets by the teacher or students. Puppets may be highly motivational, by adding a sense of mystery or meaning to the story for the listener. Young children are puppeteers by nature, because they are creative and imaginative when using puppets. Even the shyest of students will use a puppet as a means of expressing him/herself (Bromley, 1988).

The literary works appropriate for puppetry are plentiful. Any character from children's literature may be made into a puppet and used to tell a story. Basal reader stories, folk tales, and picture books are the easiest to adapt for a puppet show.

Puppets may be made from paper bags, socks, cardboard cylinders,

boxes, tag-board, construction paper, paper plates, an envelope, gloves, mittens, sticks (tongue depressors), rubber balls, fruit and vegetables, sticks, shadows, humanity, masks, milk cartons, and papier-mache (Bromley, 1988; and Coody, 1992). As students make their puppets they may want to add clothing, hair, facial features, buttons, beads, feathers, sequins, ribbons, costume jewelry, yarn, fabric swatches, gourds, leaves, moss, and pine cones (Bromley, 1988; Cox, 1988; and Coody, 1992). Once the puppets are made, a decision needs to made whether to use a puppet stage. A stage may be made quite simply by two children holding a quilt, sheet or blanket or by draping it over a broom-stick balanced on two chairs while the puppeteers are behind it. A cardboard box on a table or a large refrigerator box will serve as a stage (Bromely, 1998; and Cox, 1988).

Ross (1980) has several suggestions to consider for a successful production. These include:

1. puppet productions should be short in duration in order to maintain the interest of the children;
2. use music to tie the performance together, it also helps create effects and moods;
3. when doing a puppet show be sure to observe the ceremonies accorded to a play: darken the room, light the stage area,

introduce the puppets and puppeteers, have the puppets take curtain calls and so on;

4. the puppeteers should improvise rather than memorize the lines as the performance will seem stilted; and
5. a narrator should be used to help move the performance along, fill in the setting, describe the passage of time, and so on (Bromley, 1988).

Students enjoy sharing their puppet shows and this delight could be shared with an older grade, a younger grade, at a PTA meeting, grandparents at Grandparents Day, and adults at the Senior Citizen's Center or Nursing Home.

Play with Script

The adaption of a literacy work to script form may be written by the teacher or student. When adapting a script, underline the important parts that are manageable by the cast and include only scenes and characters that are important to the plot. Do not change words or thoughts of the author. A Script should last thirty minutes or less. As the students practice the play, they can add or delete lines. As the participants become confident with their parts, they are usually able to add to the role and its development.

During rehearsals, the students should practice using costume and

props with the various sets and scenery. Also, at rehearsals students must work together cooperatively as a group.

The actual performance is the finale to all the work. If possible do not use a stage as it difficult to hear or see the actors because they are so far from the audience. Also, prompting should be avoided, instead; emphasis should be stressed that they should think on their feet. If a person forgets his/her lines, he/she should improvise lines to replace the forgotten ones.

Once the group selected the literary work and the type of dramatic production they were to schedule rehearsal time. Each group has provided a description of the process they used in preparation for their final production presented during the Global/Multicultural Week at the university.

Northeastern Asia Dramatic Presentations

Group 1 choose to present The Paper Crane, a Japanese Story by M. Bang in the form of a Readers' Theater. Once the book was chosen, students read the story and identified the narrator and characters. The story was written into a play form with speaking parts for all. Each person involved received a copy of the text and read through it to make the necessary corrections. When the script was finalized a copy was placed in a folder for each person involved. The group also decided to include making an origami paper crane after the Readers'

Theater presentation. All members of the group demonstrated making the crane while one member gave the directions. The direction for making the paper crane was developed by one of the members of the group. The directions for making the origami paper crane are included so a teacher may use it after reading the story.

Directions for the Paper Crane (origami).

- Take a square piece of paper. (It must be square.)
- Fold in half.
- Put the fold on top. Fold the upper right corner down to bottom of the sheet to make a triangle and crease. Make sure the bottom of the triangle and sheet match.
- Flip the paper over and do the other side the same way.
- Then put the point to the top. Put your pointy finger between the pieces of paper to the point. Then push the corners together and fold.
- You should have a diamond.
- Put the corner over and do the other side the same way.
- Fold the right corner to the line, making a small triangle like the other fold. Then do the same to the other four flaps.
- You should have what looks like an ice cream cone.
- Take the ice cream part of the cone and fold it down even with the cone, and crease. Do the same thing the other way and

crease.

- Bring the ice cream part back to the original position on the cone.

- Open the flaps on the front of the cone. Take the tip of the cone and open it carefully fold it so it makes an elongated diamond. It should look like a boat first, then after the fold you will have the diamond.

- Do the same to the other side.

- You should have a diamond with two legs.

- Point the legs down and put your fingers in the side opening. Fold the sides together by pushing your fingers together.

- Now you should have a critter with horns.

- Bring both bottoms up to cover the horns.

- Now pinch the bottom of the object, and pull the left horn out to the left a little bit and crease.

- Do the same to the right horn, remember to pull it out a little bit and crease.

- Now pick one horn to be the head and fold the tip over.

- Take the wings and with your fingers push them out, but do not fold.

- Grab the bird at the bottom under the head and pull the tail and the wings should flap.

Group 2 obtained the children's book Seven Korean Sisters by Hahn and Han (1980) from a family with a Korean child. After reading the story they decided to portray the sisters wearing white robes with colored sashes and authentic looking painted masks. Because one male was present in the group, he assumed the duties of the narrator. One of the females was chosen as the main character, the littlest sister. The other two females served as the other six sisters. To help the audience visualize the six colors mentioned in the story, crepe paper streamers in each color were glued to wooden dowels. Traditional Korean music was played in the background during the performance. The story ended with the youngest sister receiving a Korean dress with every color represented. The female playing the role of the littlest sister then appeared in a traditional Korean dress, which was borrowed from a Korean friend.

Group 3 choose to present a wide story of Tikki Tikki Tembo, a Chinese Story retold by A. Mosie. Because the story has four characters, each member of the group was responsible for one character. The role of the Old Man with the Ladder was responsible for narrating the introduction and ending, and the roles of the mother, Chang, and Tikki Tikki Tembo were responsible for the speaking quotations from the book. Costumes consisted of simple clothing, found at home, that ranged from pajamas to an authentic

Asian tunic. One student quickly designed and sewed a tunic and a skirt. Slippers were used for shoes, and an authentic straw hat was worn by the Old Man. Props consisted of gray garbage bags filled with newspaper for rocks, a sheet of blue paper for the water, a cardboard box cut open and painted like a well, real rice cakes, a bunk bed ladder, and a straw picnic basket. A number of reading practices were held, and speaking parts were memorized. They also practiced acting out the story a few times, in the long room that was used for the final production. They used 3/4 of the length of the long portion of a room, with the well at one end, the mother and stream in the middle, and the Old Man at the other end. Exaggerated movements, volume and speed of spoken lines contributed to the success of the production and enjoyment of the audience.

Group 4 used The Boy of the Three Year Nap by Diane Snyder a Japanese Story. The characters include: Taro, Taro's mother, the wealthy merchant, the Ugigami (Spirit of the town), and the bride. Taro, a lazy young boy in the story, devises a plan to become wealthy. His plan is foiled by his mother who has a plan of her own. The group chose the story by correlating the number of characters in the story to the number of people in the group. The presentation was based on a traditional Japanese puppet show to create intimacy with the audience.

The puppet pattern and materials list was found in Japan: World Neighbor Series Grades K-3 written by Karen Bauer and Rosa Drew (1994). The presentation consisted of a narrator that guided the story-line and puppets that represented each character, with two characters receiving voiced animation from behind the stage curtain.

Group 5 selected The Chinese Mirror by M. Ginsberg. The Korean folk tale was dramatically presented by a play with a script. The group met and decided that the first step was to research and locate available books. When they had used the available resources they met to pool the books they found. Then they decided on the book, The Chinese Mirror. They chose the book because it contained some humor and was simple enough to act out. They also felt it would be enjoyable for an audience. After becoming familiar with the story they chose to do a play with a script.

Once that was decided, they chose a narrator. The characters were: Man, Wife, Old Crone, Father-in-law, boy, and neighbor. The remaining three people each played two of the six characters. They helped each other develop costumes by using the pictures in the book. They also used their resources to locate the necessary props, which included a small trunk, a mirror and a pebble.

They practiced several times before the actual performance. Group six selected The Rooster's Horns by E. Young. This Chinese

tale was performed via a shadow puppet play. It was performed by a collaborative group of three people. Each of the group members was responsible for the creation of the puppets. This was done by creating patterns for body parts on tracing paper and then transferring the parts to tag board. The individual parts were then cut apart and connected with paper fasteners. Chopsticks were then attached to each character in order to move them throughout the play.

Setting the stage was quite simple. It was created by draping a sheet over two chairs, and it was illuminated with the use of an overhead projector behind it. Two of the group members manipulated the puppets and the third acted as the narrator for the story.

The overhead lights were dimmed, the stage was illuminated, and everyone's attention was captured by the magic of Rooster, Dragon and Worm.

Once the groups selected the literary work and dramatic presentation, a dress rehearsal was schedule with the entire class in attendance. Each group presented their production while the professor and students from the other groups critiqued the presentation. Upon completion of the dress rehearsal the groups drew numbers for the order in which they would present their

production during the scheduled time designated for Children's Literature class during the Global/Multicultural Week focusing on Northeastern Asia. Once the order of presentations was established, the professor designed a program for the event that was distributed to the audience before the performance.

The presentations were presented to the third, fourth, and fifth grade classes from a local elementary school, members of the administration, faculty members, and students from the university. During the actual presentation of the six performances, the Center for Interactive Technology in Education and Corporations (InTEC) in the School of Education video taped the productions.

Conclusion

Students learned research techniques, a variety of dramatic presentations, collaboration among group members, editing, and rewriting techniques, how to find and collect cultural materials, and information about China, Korea, and Japan. All of these techniques are employed by classroom teachers, and these students have first hand experience in applying these methods. Students wish to share the information and knowledge they gained with those reading this article in hopes that they will integrate these activities in their classrooms.

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